



Farms to Food Banks Program 2nd Harvest Inland Northwest Project Description 2009

2nd Harvest Inland Northwest's Farms to Food Banks pilot project joins area farms, volunteers and other community partners to develop a sustainable stream of locally grown food that brings mutual benefits to regional agriculture and low-income consumers. The goal is to promote a broad local marketplace for Washington-grown food, while expanding consumption of nutritious fresh products by people in need.

2nd Harvest, the leading charitable food distribution center in Eastern Washington, provides a secondary market for the regional agriculture industry. Since Nov. 2008, 2nd Harvest has been purchasing products from farms and ranches across the state. Agriculturally rich Eastern Washington offers prime opportunities for partnerships close to home. Recent purchases have been made from producers in Colville, Lind and Mount Vernon.

These products – potatoes, eggs and milk – will reach low-income people through 2nd Harvest's network of 20 emergency food banks in Spokane County along with the feeding programs served by the branch warehouse in Tri-Cities and subsidiary distribution organizations in Walla Walla and Stevens counties. 2nd Harvest is dedicated to providing nutritious food that improves the health and well-being of children, families and seniors at risk of malnutrition and illness. Food bank lines are getting longer as high grocery costs and other expenses impact a wider range of households. In Spokane, 2nd Harvest's 2008 client survey found that one of five clients was visiting a food bank for the first time. 2nd Harvest's network of 20 emergency food outlets in Spokane currently serves more than 16,000 people each month, an increase of 6 percent from last year. Other feeding programs have reported increases of 10 to 30 percent.

The Farms to Food Banks pilot project is expanding existing and cultivating new relationships resulting in a wider variety of Washington-grown food for 2nd Harvest's network of food banks and meal centers in 21 Eastern Washington counties. When it is most cost effective to purchase product in bulk, 2nd Harvest calls on volunteers to package the food in consumer-size portions or in quantities requested by partner charities. Besides purchasing farm-fresh food, 2nd Harvest also invites farmers to donate surplus products to 2nd Harvest. In addition, 2nd Harvest connects dedicated volunteers with gleaning opportunities at farms in the region.

Half of the food donated to 2nd Harvest last year was perishable and fresh food will grow to 70 to 80 percent of what's distributed in the future. 2nd Harvest constantly works for greater efficiencies in moving donated food to its point of need. Many of 2nd Harvest's partner agencies lack cold storage or other

infrastructure to handle fresh food. 2nd Harvest's Mobile Food Bank program is an example of a strategy for safely and efficiently moving fresh food to where it's needed most in high-need rural and urban communities throughout Eastern Washington.

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